

## Amherst Town Planning Meeting 3-19-08

Question – What should the vision statement include for Amherst 10-15 years from now?

Brainstorm suggestions: (As best as I could read the post its)

- A Leader, Achieving, Excellence in Education, Historic Preservation, Open Space, ?, Town Access and all recreation
- Amherst is a small town with a rural environment actively protecting our environment and aquifer, and provide schools and cultural activities based on our long history
- Amherst is a small historic southern NH town which maintained its rural character while building a sound & diversified business base with wonderful schools and a total commitment to water quality and sustainable living.
- Amherst is to Boston what Westport, CT is to Manhattan. A nice place to live, convenient to Boston that offers cultural and rural values that support the price of my home.
- Historical town continuing to make history.
- Sustainability, Sense of place, a place people want to be from. Connectedness. People go to school sports, shop locally, meet friends in the village, stay on in retirement, come back after college.
- Small NE town of rural and diverse peoples. Dedicated to ??? cultural, historical, education and environmental quality. While developing a commercial base to support the taxes/ ???
- Amherst is a town in which the community through its commerce supports itself. The education systems directly reflect the commerce and the heritage of its history of character. Education one of the best.
- Amherst is a town with a diverse commerce system centered on professional and career occupations.
- Amherst is a rural town centered on an educational system that promotes learning for professional & scientific careers.
- Sustainable, self contained, resourceful, educated
- ??? community with ?? on space and some ??? retaining rural character.

Key words/concepts that were selected and defined:

**SUSTAINABILITY** (Agreement that this was not the proper word but a substitute word was not chosen)

Definition: A place where you would -- Shop, Make a living, Have places for recreation, Grow Old, Have vibrant social connections, afford to live here.

Advantages:

- Diversity
- Healthy Community
- Supports multi-generational families – creates a “community”
- People feel connected giving greater sense of community
- It provides the “village” we want to raise our children
- Supports constant focus on self improvement (TQM)
- Allows alternatives for things like education, recreation & employment
- Builds sense of peace of mind

Disadvantages

- Not a concern shared by members of the community as expressed by the focus group discussions
- People want this as a bedroom community – exclusive enclave
- Tension with goals that have been established
- Negative impact on property values
- Lack of turnover in population stymies creativity

- Encourages mediocrity – people will allow the few to make decisions for the mass
- Not achievable as we would want it to be
- Encourages inbreeding within the community

## **SMALL TOWN**

Definition: Not defined by size but by character, a sense of community, walk around the village, one traffic light, the feel and function of a small town, where you know “everyone in town” and everyone in your class at school

### Advantages

- Safety
- Support – you can borrow that cup of sugar or neighbors will bring meals for 6 months when you are ill
- Connectivity
- Traditions, shared experiences i.e. 4<sup>th</sup> of July
- Sense of place
- Shared ideas

### Disadvantages

- Lack of privacy
- Ingrown
- Exclusivity
- Seems fake

## **RURAL**

Definition: The sense you get from the physical space. NE rural architecture – old barns, stone walls, Critters are seen, views and narrow winding roads.

### Advantages

- Adds to property values
- Quietness
- Smell of openness
- Outdoor opportunities and ones that are close enough you don’t have to use your car to get there
- Quality of life

### Disadvantages

- Bugs
- Reliance on cars for transportation
- Isolation
- Hinder economic development
- Lack of ability to walk in neighborhoods
- Dives up cost of land and thus house costs go up

## **ENVIRONMENTAL**

Definition: Awareness of our environmental resources and a commitment to protect and preserve them and to use them wisely.

### Advantages:

- Clean water, clean air, better health
- Bargaining chips with other towns
- Draws other like minded people to town

- Reduced noise and light pollution
- Increase wildlife

#### Disadvantages

- Restricts economic development
- Restricts housing development
- Imposes on individual rights to exploit their rights

#### LEADERSHIP / EXCELLENCE

Definition: Not willing to accept mediocrity, want to raise the bar, people are proud of the town and believe that we have the best, people are willing to work for excellence vs expecting it to be handed to them, leader in education, music, arts, theater, sports cultural diversity and government

#### Advantages

- More involved citizenry
- Sense of pride and people would be more involved
- Greater flexibility to respond to change
- Ownership
- Innovative

#### Disadvantages

- Perception of snobbery
- Possibility of mis-spent funds as directions or technology changes
- ROI on knowing what is enough
- Pressure on young people
- Exclusivity

Using a quick vote with each person voting 1-5 on how important each topic was we got:

Topic	Votes	Percent of possible
<b>Sustainability</b>	30	67%
<b>Small Town</b>	32	71%
<b>Rural</b>	41	91%
<b>Environmental</b>	44	98%
<b>Leadership/Excellence</b>	36	80%

Conclusion: Focus should be on **Rural, Environmental and Leadership/Excellence** as these 3 each received a score of 80% or higher.

Sue Stitt took a stab at combining ideas and priorities that were discussed and putting them into a short vision statement. Predominately this is a combination of all of the brainstormed vision statements in relationship to the 3 areas that the board choose to focus on.

Amherst is a town with a rural feel, rich with open spaces and reminders of its historic legacy. Amherst aggressively protects its ecosystems and, based on a sound and mixed commercial base, supports a citizenry that is active in the pursuit of excellence in education, recreation, local government and cultural diversity.

Next meeting – Wed 3/26 7:30 PM Town Hall

**Prepwork :** Should take no more than 20 - 30 min.

Under each of the 3 major headings –

- Rural Character
- Environment protection
- Leadership/Excellence

List areas (not necessarily solutions) for each of the headings that you think should be addressed for Amherst to reach this vision. My observation is that it might be helpful to think of these areas in terms of History, Commerce, Education and Environment. I am including the following chart thinking that may help you organize your thoughts.

	History	Commerce	Education	Environment
Rural				
Excellence Leadership/ Environmental				